

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4256

C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 0727

E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: CASC, OGEN, NP

SUBJECT: PERMITS TO CLIMB MOUNT EVEREST

REF: (A) STATE 034555 (B) STATE 036887

1. FOLLOWING IS LATEST INFORMATION ON STATUS OF FORD AND TRIMBLE APPLICATIONS TO CLTB MOUNT EVEREST BASED ON EXTENSIVE CONVERSATION FEBRUARY 16 WITH UNDER SECRETARY IN CHARGE OF MOUNTAINEERING IN MFA, MOHAN PANDE. COUNTRY TO NEWS STORY (REFTEL B) FORD HAS NOT BEEN DENIED PERMIT TO CLIMB MOUNTAIN, ALTHOUGH, AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, HIS REQUEST FOR SOLO EXPEDITION WAS REJECTED EARLIER BY NEPALESE. MFA FEBRUARY 13 RECEIVED LETTER FROM FORD IN WHICH HE PROVIDED NAMES OF FIVE CLIMBERS WHO WOULD ACCOMPANY HIM TO EVEREST, THEREBY MEETING MFA REQUIREMENT THAT HE CLIMB AS PART OF "GROUP EXPEDITION". ALTHOUGH MINISTRY HAD ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO ASK FOR FURTHER ENDORSEMENT OF FORD APPLICATION AND QUALIFICATIONS OF NEW CLIMBERS, PANDE NOW STATES THAT HE CONSIDERS ORIGINAL DEPARTMENT ENDORSEMENT APPLICABLE TO FORD'S ENTIRE PARTY.

2. NEW CHARACTER OF FORD EXPEDITION RAISES SERIOUS QUESTION, HOWEVER, OF WHETHER DEPARTMENT ENDORSEMENT SHOULD BE AUTOMATICALLY EXTENDED TO ENTIRE GROUP. WE ARE UNABLE TO JUDGE TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS OF CLIMBERS AND REMAIN DISTURBED BY FACT THAT ALASKAN ALPINE CLUB ORIGINAL ENDORSEMENT NEITHER ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR EXPEDITION, NOR CERTIFIED TECHNICAL

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EXPERTISE REQUIRED FOR CLIMB (REF B STATE 017405).

THIS CONCERN IS UNDERSCORED NOT ONLY BY CHARACTER OF FORD REQUEST (TO CLIMB IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER WHICH, IN OPINION OF LOCAL EXPERTS, CONSTITUTES SERIOUS RISK OF LOSS OF LIFE) BUT ALSO BY COMPLETE DISAVOWAL OF FORD EXPEDITION BY AMERICAN ALPINE CLUB (LETTER DATED JAN. 9 TO DENNIS KUX, KATHMANDU 0324). DEPARTMENT, THEREFORE, MAY WISH TO CONSIDER THIS QUESTION. COUNTRY DIRECTOR KUX, WHO IS EXPECTED TO RETURN TO DEPARTMENT FEBRUARY 23, SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED THAT ACTION NOT BE TAKEN UNTIL HIS RETURN. MFA OFFICIALS, INCLUDING JOINT SECRETARY, HAVE DISCUSSED MATTER WITH KUX AND PROVIDED HIM THEIR INFORMAL VIEWS.

3. MFA REMAINS SYMPATHETIC TO TRIMBLE APPLICATION AND HAS STATED THAT WERE IT NOT FOR FACT THAT FORD REQUEST RECEIVED BY MFA FIRST, PERMIT WOULD BE GRANTED TRIMBLE GROUP. BARRING FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS, HOWEVER, MFA SUGGESTS THAT TRIMBLE MAY WISH TO SHIFT HIS REQUEST TO FOLLOWING 8000 METER PEAKS WHICH REMAIN OPEN FOR POST-MONSOON CLIMBING SEASON 1976: LHOTSE, NUPTSE, DHAULAGIRI AND MANSLU.

4. WE WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS FOLLOWING KUX'S RETURN TO INS.
CARGO

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